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HB 456

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To Whom It May Concern;

I am writing to oppose HB 456. As a high school student at Billings West High School, I served on Planned Parenthood Teen Board, a group of peer educators. My experience on the board was phenomenal. Not only did I learn about Planned Parenthood's extensive services to our community, but I also learned about my own sexuality and how to use it responsibly.

In School District #2, which serves the greater Billings area, the sex education policy is limited to abstinence only. The effects of this policy were obvious in my classmates. As peer educators our most important job was to be knowledgeable. After joining teen board, I was approached by peers constantly with questions about contraceptives, 'normal' sexual behavior, or simply 'how it all worked?'. I was in awe about how much my peers did not know about their sexuality and consequently how little control they felt they had over it. Even more obvious than the sexual ignorance was the many pregnancy bellies around campus. In my senior class alone, fourteen women were pregnant throughout the year.

Our second job, of course, was sharing our knowledge in a structured environment. In the majority of the classes we were invited to, since the abstinence only policy extended to

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ourselves when we were in the classroom, we discussed the cost of parenting, socially, financially, temporally, and physically. We emphasized the responsibility of being a parent and discussed that pregnancy is a result of sex. We echoed the current curriculum and told the students that to avoid this taxation of your resources, abstinence is truly the best policy.

I went to the hearing on HB 456 in the house a few weeks ago, and I must say, what many of the supporters of this bill said was untruthful and ill composed. As a recent high school student, I can not express the dire need for comprehensive sex education in the world of young adults. We live in a world in which we are constantly bombarded with sex in our media and advertising while the truth of sex is swept under the rug because of this abstinence only curriculum. I surveyed many parents during my work as a peer educator and the majority assumed that their kids were being taught about safe sex in school. Consequently, they had avoided the awkward sex talk. Please consider this when you are considering HB 456. School is a venue for knowledge and insight. Please don't take away the absolutely critical knowledge that Planned Parenthood brings to the community through their educational outreach. In Billings, certainly the school district is not providing it and the parents in many cases are not either.

I urge you, do not support HB 456.

Best,
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